

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Apolonia Stice

Apolonia Stice, second of three daughters, was born in the sugar plantation community of Spreckelsville, Maui in 1941. Her parents, Matias and Romualda Agonoy, were immigrants from Ilocos Norte, Philippines.

In 1942, the family moved from Maui to Lānaʻi where Matias Agonoy worked in the pineapple fields and Romualda Agonoy tended to the children and took in laundry.

The family resided first in Down Camp, later Up Camp. All three daughters played with others in the neighborhood, attended the Catholic Church, and studied at Lānaʻi High and Elementary School.

A 1959 recipient of a Dole Scholarship, Apolonia Stice, was able to attend the University of Hawaiʻi and Marylhurst College.

Following college graduation, she pursued a teaching career, which spanned three decades, including a two-year stint with the Peace Corps in the Philippines.

Retired since 1995, Apolonia Stice enjoys spending time with her husband, Gary, her daughters, and grandchildren. He currently serves as president of the Friends of the East-West Center in Honolulu.

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Apolonia Agonoy Stice (AS)

Honolulu, O‘ahu

August 12, 2014

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Apolonia Agonoy Stice on August 12, 2014. The interview is Warren Nishimoto, and we’re in Honolulu, O‘ahu. And we’re doing this project for the history of Lāna‘i City.

And so, good afternoon.

AS: Hello.

WN: First question I have for you is, if you can tell me the year that you were born, and where you were born.

AS: Let’s see, now. I was born in a plantation community, Camp 11, Spreckelsville, on the island of Maui. My father worked for the sugar [plantation, Hawaiian Commercial & Sugar Company].

WN: What year were you born?

AS: What year, must I tell you what year I was born? (Chuckles) Nineteen forty-one.

WN: Okay. And you were talking about your father.

AS: My father was working for the sugar plantation at the time, so we lived in a very small camp, Camp 11. And my birth certificate even states that it was Camp 11, Spreckelsville, Maui, Territory of Hawai‘i.

WN: Can you tell me a little bit about what you know about his background in terms of where he’s from and when he came to Hawai‘i?

AS: My father was from Ilocos Norte, Bacarra. Cabulalaan was his barrio. He arrived sometime in the early 1930s. He left in the Philippines my mother and a son. After my brother died—he must have been about six years old. After he died, then my mother felt that there was nothing to keep her in the Philippines, so she elected to work her way to come to Hawai‘i and be with my father. So, my mother arrived in 1937.

WN: So, your father came first, earlier.

- AS: My father came in the early [19]30s, yes. So, my parents were in Camp 11, and my older sister Marina was also born in Camp 11. Then a year later, my father was transferred from working on the sugar plantation to Hawaiian Pineapple Company, so we moved to the island of Lānaʻi. That was within a year, because my younger sister was born in July of 1942. Her name is Magdalena.
- WN: So, Marina was born in [19]39, you were born in [19]41, and Magdalena was born in [19]42?
- AS: Correct, yes.
- WN: And what was your father's name?
- AS: My father's name was Matias Mendoza Agonoy. My mother's name is Romualda Juan Agonoy.
- WN: And where was your mother from? Was she from Bacarra, too?
- AS: My mother was from Laoag. Also Ilocos Norte.
- WN: So, they were already married by the time your father came here?
- AS: They were married, yes.
- WN: You don't know the exact year that your father came?
- AS: Just about 1930, because I think after my brother died, he was about six years old, so that would bring it up to about 1936. That's when she decided she had nothing to hold her in the Philippines, so she left there.
- WN: Did your father tell you anything about his life in the Philippines before coming to Hawai'i?
- AS: Yes. In my father's later years, when he was about ninety-eight, ninety-nine years old, we took care of him. My father lived to be a hundred years old. And he lived with us, and as you know, most older people, when they're at that age where they recall a lot of things that happened to them when they were young. Every night when my father would say goodnight to me, he would say, "Did you bring in the carabao? Did you tell Maria to get the carabao?" So, he was always talking about the water buffalo. So then, that would indicate that he always worked on the farm, working with the water buffalo. So, of course, I always told him, "Oh, yes, Daddy, I've already told Maria about the carabao." And also Tomas, his other brother. So, that's about the only thing. And then, he was very young when he came here. I believe he must have been early twenties, to work in the sugar plantation, and then pineapple.
- WN: Did he ever tell you why he wanted to come?
- AS: Like everybody else, they wanted to make as much money as they could, and then later take that money and then return to the Philippines and have a better life there. Of course, that never really happened, because we were all here, and both my parents are buried on the island of Lānaʻi. So that was their dream. Their dream was to make lots of money, then take their family back to the Philippines and live the life of a king. (Chuckles)
- WN: Did he come straight to Spreckelsville when he came in the early [19]30s?
- AS: No, I believe he first went to Kahuku [O'ahu].

WN: Kahuku?

AS: Yes, because my uncle was there in Kahuku. He often talks about the train ride to Kahuku, you know, from maybe Kāneʻohe, then you know, going up to Kahuku. So, he did tell me about that, yes. So, his first job was in Kahuku.

WN: I see. And eventually, he made his way to Maui?

AS: Made his way to Maui, and then finally, Lānaʻi.

WN: Did he ever tell you what kind of work he did on Maui, in Spreckelsville?

AS: Probably just picking the sugarcane, laborer. You often see pictures of workmen cutting cane, burning cane. So, I would suppose that that's the type of job that he did, manual labor.

WN: Of course, you were only a year old when you moved out of Maui, right?

AS: That's right. So, I really don't remember anything, except that when I was in the fifth grade—so that would make me about ten or eleven years old, the camp was still there. Fortunately, I was able to see the camp, so I have an idea of how the houses were all lined up in a circle, and then there was sort of a small courtyard. So, I did get to see Camp 11 before they tore everything down.

WN: So, tell me about your mother. Did she tell you anything about her life in the Philippines, in Laoag?

AS: Not much, except that when she was in Hawaiʻi, to supplement my father's income from working in the pineapple fields, she would do laundry for the laborers. At that time, she would charge, every month, ten dollars to do the laundry for each guy. But you know, at that time, that was a lot of money. So, we grew up with my mother doing laundry for sometimes twenty people.

WN: This is on Lānaʻi?

AS: This is on Lānaʻi. My mother did not have a formal education, but she grew up next to a school. So, every morning, she would hear them sing the national anthem of the Philippines, but in English. Every once in a while, while she used to be ironing when we were growing up, she would sing that song to us. You know, the national anthem, because she heard it every day. But she herself did not go to school, because I guess in those days, they said, "Oh, the women stay home and do all the work, and then the guys go to school."

WN: How many siblings did your mother have?

AS: She only had one brother, Francisco Juan. And then, her mother died, so the father remarried, and then I only know of another sister, Concepcion Juan.

WN: And your father, how many siblings did he have?

AS: My father had four other siblings. My father was the oldest.

WN: Was he the only one who came to Hawaiʻi?

AS: No, he had an older brother that came, an older half-brother who came first. His name is Ambrosia Mendoza. He came first, and he lived on the island of Kauaʻi. Then, of course, we were on Lanaʻi. Then when my father found out that he was there, of course, you know, with the closeness of Filipino families, then he moved to Lānaʻi to be with us. They had the same father, different mother.

WN: I see. Oh, you know a lot about your family.

AS: I do. I know some very interesting things about my grandfather, too. (Chuckles)

WN: Your grandfather on what side?

AS: My grandfather on my father's side. (Chuckles)

WN: Oh, yeah? What was he like?

AS: My grandfather, according to my mother and my father, was very handsome. His name was Alejandro Mendoza. He came from a family of twelve siblings. Well, my grandfather was kind of a Casanova guy, so he liked my grandmother, Andrea. This is Alejandro Mendoza, and he had as a mistress this girl, Andrea. And my father was born. Then my grandmother told my father, "Your last name is going to be Agonoy because I am the mother, and I'm not going to have any more children with Alejandro." Well, lo and behold, she had four other children from Alejandro, and then all the other four were all Mendozas. My father is the only one who's Agonoy, after my grandmother.

That was not the end. Later on, my grandfather was looking for a younger girl. She probably went off with him several times, but then she said, "No, I don't want to have a relationship with you anymore, because my husband is in Hawaiʻi."

And he said, "Oh, no, no, I want you." That type of thing, you know. Because she rejected him, my grandfather—so they say being Filipino, you know, really hot-blood and everything, so he killed the lady. Then my grandfather went to jail for that. He went to Manila, to a jail in Manila, and then he died there.

While all this was going on, my uncle, who's a Mendoza, was living on Kauaʻi, and this lady's husband was on Kauaʻi. So, you know, everybody was going, "Uh-oh." (Chuckles) That could be, I'm not sure, but that could be one of the reasons why my uncle left Kauaʻi to be with us, to get away from the guy, who knew that his father killed his wife. Yeah, well, that's the way it goes.

(Laughter)

But that's an interesting story I've heard.

WN: Have you told anybody this history before?

AS: Oh, yes, all of our cousins and my two sisters know about it. I even know the name but, of course, we don't have to mention the names.

(Laughter)

WN: Well, that's where the good looks in the family came from, huh?

(Laughter)

AS: So technically, my name should have been Apolonia Mendoza. Just looking back, oh, I'm so glad I'm not an A.M., because the flow of my name is nice, you know, Apolonia Agonoy. Apolonia Mendoza? However, my two younger sisters all have names that start with M. So, Marina Mendoza is nice. Magdalena Mendoza is nice. But not Apolonia Mendoza.

(Laughter)

WN: Well, when you look back at it ...

AS: Yes, when you look back.

WN: That's a nice last name.

AS: It is, it is. And you know, it [Agonoy] just goes with my name.

WN: Oh, but that's very interesting.

AS: So, my grandfather was quite a guy.

WN: And now, you said that when your father came here, your mother was still in the Philippines.

AS: Mm-hmm [yes].

WN: And they had a son?

AS: They actually had two sons. The first son was Tomas, and he died when he was still there. The other one lived to be about six or seven years old, Dionicio. My mother really, really, really loved this kid. When she came to Hawai'i, she still had his clothing in a trunk that she brought from the Philippines. So, as we were growing up, whenever she'd look into the trunk, we'd hear her crying, and we couldn't figure out why she was crying. Then she'd tell us the story about her son, and our brother.

WN: Okay. So, when you were about a year old, your family moved from Spreckelsville, Maui to ...

AS: Lana'i.

WN: And you said your father got a job at Hawaiian Pineapple.

AS: Hawaiian Pineapple Company, yes.

WN: Where did you folks first live on Lana'i?

AS: Well, we lived in what we called Down Camp, and I believe that was Block 32. I'm not—all I know is that ...

WN: Block 32?

AS: Yes, Down Camp. You know, everybody knows Down Camp, and Up Camp would be towards what is now [The Lodge at] Kō'e. Then, there was—oh, my gosh, I even forgot what it was called, where all the supervisors lived. That was way up on the hillside. You probably saw that.

WN: Yes.

AS: So, you go up the hill and you see all the nice homes, then you come downhill, then you see all the plantation houses.

(Laughter)

WN: So, tell me about Block 32. Who was living there?

AS: Well, you know, there were quite a few people that I still remember. There was the Balderas family. Monica and her husband run the hardware store. Then, there was the Soriano family. The kids are mostly [living] on the Mainland. I guess our most famous neighbor who lived in the same block was Alton Lopez. He was [later known, famously, as] Al Lopaka.

WN: Yes.

AS: The singer. He lived in the same block as we did. Of course, he was much younger than I am, but you know, we were all in the same block.

WN: So, what was his first name?

AS: Alton.

WN: Alton.

AS: Alton Lopez.

WN: So, Alfred is the brother? Alfred Lopez?

AS: He could be the brother, because Alton was the youngest. He was the baby-baby. Alfred could be the brother.

WN: We interviewed Alfred.

AS: Yeah, for this [project]?

WN: I can't remember if he told me he was the brother, or he was the uncle.

AS: I think he's the brother, yes.

WN: Brother. Oh, he's a good-looking guy, Alfred.

AS: Yes (chuckles). There were a lot of good-looking guys on Lana'i. (Chuckles)

WN: So, Block 32, was it primarily Filipino?

AS: No. Further up on the next block, there were a lot of Japanese families. In the back of us were Filipinos, Portuguese, Hawaiian families.

WN: And what kind of work did your father do for Hawaiian Pineapple [Company]?

AS: He picked pineapples, and he also planted. So, he was a laborer. That's the reason why he always felt that—you know, like, I call it immigrant mentality. They always want the children to do better than they did, so they always wanted us to go to school, go to college, and get an education, get a degree, get a better job. You know how that goes.

WN: So, they always stressed that to you?

AS: Yes, yes.

WN: And you said your mother did laundry for Filipino bachelors?

AS: Yes, she worked very hard. And then, when she wasn't doing laundry, she was always sewing, doing crafts, crocheting, and everything.

She always used to tell us stories. She could read and write Filipino, but not English. So, when we first went to school, there were a lot of words that you heard all the time that were mispronounced. So, when you go to school, you say them, and then your classmates would say, "I always thought that it was pronounced this way." But you didn't know the difference, because you know, that's how you heard it. And then, eventually, of course, you knew the difference, so you adjusted.

WN: So, your mother and father spoke Ilocano?

AS: They spoke Ilocano and we all grew up understanding and speaking Ilocano. So, yes, I do speak Ilocano.

WN: So, you spoke Ilocano with your parents?

AS: Exactly.

WN: Can you still speak today?

AS: Oh, I sure do. (Chuckles)

WN: Oh, good, fantastic.

AS: My sister and I speak Ilocano to each other all the time. I even speak Ilocano to my husband [Gary Stice], and when he answers me doing the right things, I know he understands. (Chuckles)

WN: Your husband, he's not Ilocano?

AS: No, he's not, he's *haole*. (Chuckles) But he understands the culture, and he was always respectful of, you know, older people. You know how we have to call them *manang*, *manong*, *nana*, *táta*. So, he always did that. So, my Filipino relatives always respected the fact that he did that, too. You know, he called them by their correct so-called title of respect.

WN: And when did you speak English? I know you spoke at school, but what about amongst your friends?

AS: You know, I really can't remember, but I'm sure when I was in kindergarten, I could understand English. My mother always taught us songs in Ilocano, too. That's a good question. I never even thought about when I first started to speak English. Oh, well, my older sister went to school, and

she was two years older than I. She picked up English at school, so when she came home, then she would speak a few words in English. So, I guess that's how I learned how to speak English.

WN: And amongst the three of you, you spoke Ilocano?

AS: English, mainly English, you know, growing up, and once in a while, we speak Ilocano. But mainly English.

WN: And the kids in the area on your block and so forth, were they all about the same age as you?

AS: Some were older. Let's see, we had a Filipino family like two houses up from us, and our next door neighbor was Filipino, and across the street was Filipino. The Tabura family, maybe you've heard of Lanai Tabura. His mother grew up on the same block as we did. But this was not Block 32, now. You know, after a while, we moved to Up Camp.

WN: Oh, you did? How old were you?

AS: Maybe seven.

WN: Okay. So, tell me what you did to have good fun as a kid, growing up.

AS: Well, you know, we had a gang of us, you know, growing up Up Camp. I remember one summer—we always had summer school that was run by our Catholic priest. At the end of summer school, he always gave a prize. This time, he gave for his prize a red bicycle. So, he had to draw names. So, he drew my name. So, lo and behold, we had a bicycle. But the bicycle was shared with all the kids in the block. So, we would all get together, and we would say, "Okay, you can only ride the bicycle by going once around, and then come back." Well, some people cheated, and they went once around and made a right turn, so they went two or three blocks, and then they would come [back]. But you know, we shared that bicycle with everyone in the block. And we always made a rule, "Okay, we're going to do this." So, you know, we just waited, and then we'd go around and around. So, that was one game we used to play, we used to ride our bicycles. And then the other one was playing marbles. We used to play Five Hole. I don't know if you know how to play Five Hole.

WN: Five Hole, yeah.

AS: Yeah. (Chuckles) And then, you had to get a marble that you called your *bambucha* marble. Okay, so I was never good at that. I had a cousin who was really good. It used to get me very angry, because I could never shoot the marble. But you know, I tried. So, that was one thing. The other thing that we used to play with is—you ever heard of *peewee*?

WN: *Peewee*, yes. Go ahead, tell me what *peewee* is.

AS: (Chuckles) When a broom was no longer usable, my parents or somebody would cut off the straw part, and then they would make two sticks. Just long enough so you could hit a little target thing. So, the target was, you know, out of the same broom, but one was a cylinder, and then the other one had an oval cut on one side.

WN: Yeah, the bias.

- AS: Yeah, the bias cut. So you toss it up in the air, then you hit it, and then if nobody catches it, then you run to a goal and then come back. So, we used to play that all the time, *peewee*. Today, I don't think that would be allowed, because people would say, "Oh, you might hit somebody on the head with it," and all that. But oh, we loved to play *peewee*.
- WN: So, you had one stick that you held in your hand?
- AS: You had one stick.
- WN: About how long was it?
- AS: Oh, maybe about eighteen inches or so.
- WN: Okay, foot and a half. And then, you had [a shorter] one with a bias cut.
- AS: Yes. And then, you had to toss that up, and then you had to hit it as far as you could.
- WN: How long was the small one?
- AS: The small one was about maybe three or four [inches], and then you would lay it in the hole, and then you would have to see how far you could yank it out of the hole.
- WN: Okay, with the longer stick? And then you would hit it?
- AS: Yes, you would do that, too.
- WN: Oh, so you wouldn't throw it up in the air?
- AS: There was a sequence. You put that [shorter] stick down, then you toss it [up and then hit it with the longer stick]. If somebody catches it, then you're out. But if nobody catches it, then you had another chance. You're right, you have to toss it [up], then you had to hit it. Did any of the other people tell you about *peewee*?
- WN: Something like that, yeah. Somebody said that they used the stick that you held in your hand as like a measuring thing.
- AS: Yeah, you had to ...
- WN: You would measure.
- AS: How far you [hit it]. (Chuckles) I forgot about that, yes.
- WN: Yeah. And then what, though? After you measure, what happens?
- AS: You win if you had the most number of stick measures. (Chuckles)
- WN: Oh, oh. You go by the number of lines?
- AS: Yes, the number of lines. Okay, so that was one game. Then, the other game was, of course, *jan ken pō*. At our church we had sidewalks, you know, and then there was a groove for each of the cement blocks for the sidewalk. So, we used to *jan ken pō*, and then you would have to jump. If you had paper, and the other guy had scissors, then it would be seven steps. So, you would take

seven steps, and then we'd have a goal. You know, you'd have to go, and then come back. So, this would be five, five steps, and ten would be this, ten steps. So, the more steps you took, you know, to get to your goal, then you won. And of course, if you were taller, you would take bigger steps. So, that was an advantage. (Chuckles) So, that was another game that we used to play.

WN: Interesting. So scissors, paper, stone. The paper, and scissors beating paper.

AS: Yeah, so that would be seven steps.

WN: So, scissors first, and you took seven steps.

AS: Right.

WN: So, what about rock and paper?

AS: That person would go five steps.

WN: So, why is the scissors more steps than the rock?

AS: Oh, because it's five and two. Seven. (Chuckles)

WN: I never heard that before.

AS: I don't know, maybe it was just Lāna'i. (chuckles) I don't know.

WN: Oh, that's interesting.

AS: And then, this would be ten. So, the person ...

WN: Rock would be ten?

AS: Yeah, rock.

WN: Rock beating scissors.

AS: Yeah, rock beating scissors would be ten steps. Sometimes, we would play it in pairs. So, somebody would *jan ken pō*, and then the other person would do the steps. So, whoever had long legs would be the jumper. And then whoever was good at *jan ken pō*, which I was very good at. I knew exactly what they were going to do.

(Laughter)

WN: Well, I would think that scissors would be the worst to make, because if you win the paper, you only get two steps.

AS: No, seven, five plus two.

WN: Oh, five plus two.

AS: Yes. (Chuckles)

WN: Okay. Oh, I'm sorry.

AS: No, that's okay.

WN: Got it.

AS: I don't know who made that game up. Now that I think more about it, we used to do it in pairs. Okay, so one person would *jan ken pō*, and then they'd yell, "Seven!" And then, "Ten! Come home!" (Chuckles)

WN: Oh, you would get to a certain spot, and then . . .

AS: I think it was just go, and then come back.

WN: Interesting. I've never heard that before.

AS: (Chuckles) It was just made up by us, I don't know.

WN: It was made up on Lānaʻi, that's great.

AS: You can ask other people. But you know, we used to do that only in front of our church. I don't remember—I'm sure we did it someplace else, but we always used to do it before Mass or religious education, you know, before and after.

WN: And where was the church?

AS: The [Lānaʻi] Catholic Church [of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary]? Right across from the police station.

WN: Oh, it's still there?

AS: It's still there. They had the seventy-fifth anniversary at the church not too long ago.

WN: Was that the only Catholic church?

AS: That was the only Catholic church for Lānaʻi. There was one Buddhist church, one Catholic church, one Mormon church, one Union church, one Baptist church, two Hawaiian churches, I guess.

WN: Did the majority of the Filipino families go to the Catholic church?

AS: Majority of the Filipinos went to the Catholic church, yes.

See, other games that we used to play—oh, hopscotch. But hopscotch is not an original Lānaʻi game. It's just something that—I can't think of any other games we used to play. Well, my older cousins would often come to our house and read us the same book all the time. Because, you know, books were scarce. They were like eight or nine years older than we were, so we'd ask them to please read, you know. I remember one book, *Complete Treasure of Stories*, or something. I don't know how many times we read through that book, you know, again, and again, and again. Because there was only one book.

WN: What kinds of stories, short stories?

- AS: Oh, all kinds. Yes, short stories. “Aladdin,” or something. The other thing that my cousins used to do was make up stories. They would hide pieces of paper, then we’d have to go look for it. Then she’d read it to us, you know. It was almost like a treasure hunt. But they would hide pieces of paper, then we’d have to go hunt for them. I haven’t thought about that for a long time. (Chuckles)
- WN: Sounds like some really innovative things to do.
- AS: Yes. Then, every night, we’d go to my cousin’s house and we’d bake pineapple upside down cake. (Chuckles)
- WN: Oh, you would bake it?
- AS: Because we liked to eat pineapple upside down cake, and we had nothing else to do. Then they’d show us, “You can’t stir it too much.” You know you have to do this and that. So, we used to do a lot of baking, too.
- WN: So, you know, you said that your mother did laundry. Did you help your mother at all?
- AS: Yes, we all helped. Every Sunday, we all helped my mother do laundry. She would start like eight o’clock in the morning. At one o’clock or so, I think that’s when the movies started. So, we would try to hurry so we could go to the movies at the theater. Sunday movies. So, that was fun.
- WN: And she had a washing machine?
- AS: She had two. One is called an Easy, Easy brand washing machine, where the dryer was in one compartment. Then you had to take the clothes and then put it in there. There was a wringer, too. Because she did a lot of laundry, she had one of the more so-called modern machines. When I’d visit other families, they didn’t have that washing machine. So, yes, my mother had two washing machines, and she had to boil the clothes because they were so filthy from the red dirt. So, my father, every Sunday morning, before he would go to his cockfight, he would have to build a fire to boil the hot water, and then she would put the clothes in.
- WN: Open fire?
- AS: Open fire, yes. So, boil the clothes, and then take the clothes and put them in the washing machine. Then you would wash, then you dry them. You spin-dry them. Then you had to—my mother always added starch to the clothes, because it would stay better when you’re ironing. Plus, I think it resists a lot of the dirt. So she used to make her own starch. I can still see the brand. It was a white bag. But she used to mix the . . .
- WN: You mean, she bought the powder or whatever?
- AS: Yes, she’d have to cook the starch.
- WN: So, it was mostly work clothes that she washed?
- AS: All, yes. Work clothes, and then sometimes, dress shirts. But where’d the Filipinos go to dress up? Hardly anywhere. But anyway. . . .
- WN: And then, she hung up on the . . .

- AS: Yes. And to this day, my two sisters and I, if we ever dry clothes on the line, we have to do it systematically. You cannot put the long pants with the underwear, and then shirt. Has to all be neat. My mother was very methodical. She said, “Okay, you hang all the pants here, and all the handkerchiefs here, all the t-shirts here.” So, everything was neat. So, when somebody would pass by, everything was clean. She didn’t want it to go—what did she say? She had a word to describe the up and down when you’re looking at the clothes. She didn’t like that. You know, she didn’t want the pants here, and then you look up and you see this, and you look down. She didn’t like that. So, to this day, whenever I hang things, I have to make sure that (chuckles) it’s all . . .
- WN: You do it too?
- AS: I do, I do. My two sisters do that, too. It’s just something that, you know, when your mother keeps telling you that all the time, that you just remember it.
- WN: And how would she get the clothes? Did she go and get them, or they dropped it off?
- AS: My father built a wagon. We used to have a tofu man. He used to ring the bell, and then sell tofu out of his bucket or whatnot. Well, my father built a wagon with two large wheels. She would sort out the clothes every Saturday morning. Then wrap them up, and then put ’em in the wagon. And all three of us and my mother would go down the road, and then we’d deliver all the clothes. We helped her deliver.
- WN: And what about pick up?
- AS: The same way. When we deliver [the laundered clothes], they give us the [soiled] clothes.
- WN: Oh, I see.
- AS: So she had a system. We would deliver the clothes. And then, every month, they would come and pay my mother.
- WN: When you say “wrap the clothes,” what do you mean?
- AS: Oh, she had like a little sheet, well, like the sacks that the rice used to come in.
- WN: Yeah.
- AS: Okay, that size. Then she would just lay the clothes there, and then she would tie it like a little *bentō* thing. (Chuckles) And then, she would write the [person’s] name on it.
- WN: My goodness.
- AS: She had a good system.
- WN: She sounds very meticulous and also very . . .
- AS: She couldn’t read and write English, but she knew how to organize. And all the names, you know, some of them had symbols (chuckles) for names. She had maybe a letter and a number, you know.
- WN: Interesting.

AS: My mother was very good. She died of diabetes when she was only seventy-two years old, and I was very young. I was only thirty. We've been married for forty-eight years. So, forty-six years, I've known my mother-in-law. So, my mother-in-law is more like my mother than my real mother, because of the length of time that I've been married.

WN: Can you describe your house for me?

AS: Oh, sure. My house was a plantation house with exactly two bedrooms. My sisters and I shared one bedroom, and then my parents shared the other one. We didn't have closets, so all of our clothes used to hang from the ceiling. My father built like a rack or something, a rod. To get to the clothes, you needed to have a stick to get the clothes down from the hangers. I'm sure our house was not unusual in that sense, because everybody did that. (Chuckles)

WN: So, your clothes would be hanging . . .

AS: Right, and then you need a rod to hook the hook part of the hanger.

WN: Yeah.

AS: And then undo it, and then there's your clothes.

WN: So you said, you and your sisters, there were three of you, right?

AS: Yes. So, we were all in one bedroom, and then my parents were in the other one. Today, when you look at that house, you think, oh, my gosh, how could we live? But we did. And then, it had a small living area, and then a kitchen. When we first moved into that house, they didn't have a bathroom, so we had outside toilets and outside baths. It was in the early [19]50s, I believe, when they started putting bathrooms in each of the homes. But prior to that, you know, in the middle of the night, if you had to go to the bathroom, you had to wake up your sister to go with you to walk about 150 feet to the public bathroom.

WN: Community bath.

AS: Mm-hmm [yes].

WN: Did every block have their own?

AS: Every block had their own. There was one lady in charge of heating the water, cleaning the bathroom every day.

WN: So, when you say community bath, it was like a *furo*?

AS: Exactly, like a *furo*. And then, you get your own little bucket, then you have to take [hot] water. We always liked to take a bath late, because everybody else has taken their bath. As kids, you can go into the tub, because nobody else is there (chuckles).

WN: It was still hot?

AS: Yes, it was still hot.

WN: So, you would go and scrub and everything outside the tub?

- AS: Yes, outside the tub. Then you just take the water, and then you just—you know, like *furo* kind of stuff.
- WN: And you go into the tub when you're clean?
- AS: Yes, when we're clean. And nobody else is coming, you know. So you kind of know, because it's a community thing, so you know who has taken their showers and bath, and then you can do that [i.e., enter the tub].
- WN: How big was the tub? How many could it hold?
- AS: Hold? Six people, I think, six people. It's kind of big. But when we [lived] in Kīpapa Gulch [O'ahu] for a while . . .
- WN: Yeah, you guys moved to O'ahu for . . .
- AS: For a little while.
- WN: . . . a few months. In 1947?
- AS: Right. And they had fancy outdoor bathrooms and showers. They had showers. They had about maybe six showers on one wall, and then six on the other wall. So, as little kids, we'd turn on all the showers, and we would run from one end of the shower and go around. (Laughs)
- WN: Turning the water on.
- AS: Turn the water on. Because in that particular camp in Kīpapa Gulch, there were only two families. All the rest were single men, so they took their showers when they came home, so it would just be us, the little kids, you know. So we'd turn on all the water, and then we'd just run all the way around. So, that was fun. We thought, "Wow, this is so much better than Lāna'i." You know, because Lāna'i was a *furo* type, and then this one was showers.
- WN: And the toilets were flush toilet by then?
- AS: When they put the toilets in [each home], they were all flush. But the community ones were not, they were open pits.
- WN: So, do you remember that?
- AS: Oh, yes. Some kids were very naughty. They would take a cat, a little kitten, and they would throw the kitten in the cesspool. That was really sad. You know, little kids, they do mean things. And so, you go use the bathroom, and then you hear this, meow, meow. Oh yeah, that was sad. That was one of the not-so-nice things that kids used to do.
- WN: You know, you mentioned earlier that your father used to go cockfight on Sunday.
- AS: Mm-hmm [yes].
- WN: What can you tell me about that?
- AS: Well, the cockfighting was really an entertainment for the Filipinos on Lāna'i. You know, there was nothing else. Actually, to me, there was nothing else for them to do, so they raised cocks,

roosters, and my father was one of the leaders in raising roosters. He used to get roosters from Atlanta, Georgia, and they would fly them to Lāna‘i. When that happened, everybody would come, and they’d see all the fancy roosters. So, my father was very good. As my husband would say, he raised enough money to send me to college. So (chuckles) that was my expenses for my dorm and all that, because I had free tuition from my scholarship. So, he was able to raise a lot of money. Every Sunday—I don’t know if you know how they fight chickens, or what the consequences are. Whoever wins gets the dead rooster. And the dead rooster was really tough. So, my mother would have to cook it for stew and whatnot. So, my father would come home like maybe three o’clock, and dinner is at five. For two hours for the rooster to be cooking is not enough time to make it soft, so we always had (chuckles), tough chicken for Sunday dinner. We always used to laugh about that. My father used to win all the time. He would give all my cousins a dollar each, you know.

WN: Wow. Every time he’d win, he . . .

AS: Every time he won, he would give.

WN: You folks, too?

AS: Yes. He would give us all a dollar. (Chuckles) So, that was good.

WN: Did he have a favorite chicken?

AS: He probably did. At one time, I think we did too, because we’d go around and we’d say, “Oh, this is my chicken, and this is my rooster,” and all that, you know.

My mother had this habit. She never argued with my father in terms of his hobby. If he was going to do cockfighting, then she would just say, “Okay, go.” She would take the money and she would kiss it, and in Filipino, she would say, “Come back.” Came back. (Chuckles) So, that was her ritual. She never argued with him. If he lost, he lost. As I said, that was their entertainment.

WN: Did you go to these cockfights?

AS: No, my mother didn’t want us to go. A lot of the Filipino girls our age, their parents would make food, desserts and stuff, and they’d say, “Okay, you go and sell it at the *bulangan*,” is what they were called, yeah? But my mother didn’t think that that was appropriate for us, so we never did. So, no, I never did go to the *bulangan*.

WN: So, other families, the kids would go?

AS: Yes, they would go, and they would sell.

WN: They would sell food.

AS: Yes, sell food. Sell *bibingka*, whatever the parents made.

WN: But your mother said no?

AS: My mother said no. (Chuckles)

WN: Interesting. Did your father do other kinds of recreation or gambling?

AS: In his later years, when he stopped with his roosters and taking care of them, he used to go fishing a lot. We still have a lot of his fishing poles. He would tell my mother, “Oh, why don’t you make dinner.” You know, so they would get in their jeep, and they would drive. He would drive the jeep down to Mānele, and then they’d go fishing and have dinner there. And every once in a while—this was in the early [19]70s, they would give a young *haole* girl a ride. And he would call them, “Oh, those were those kippies.” The hippies. But he called them ‘kippies’. “Oh, let’s pick up the kippies.” (Chuckles) We said, yeah, they can’t pronounce this. Anyway, so he would always talk about, “Oh, yeah, we picked up a kippie.” (Chuckles) But, yes, he enjoyed fishing. At one time, he caught an *ulua*. That was his prize catch. That was a big one, a big *ulua*.

WN: So, tell me about traditions or holidays that were celebrated in your neighborhood. Did you folks celebrate like Rizal Day, for example?

AS: Oh, yes. For Rizal Day, my cousin that I keep talking about, she taught herself how to read a manual for learning how to dance Filipino dances. So, she would look at the manual. She was real smart. She looked at the manual, and then she’d move her legs and whatnot. And she knew music, of course, so she would teach us dances. We were only thirteen, fourteen years old, and oh, we used to have so much fun with those Filipino dances. So we used to do that. She was in charge of the Rizal Day dances for years, and years, and years. Now, she’s eighty years old. She can just do a little bit, but she can still dance. In fact, she was at our *pasko* last year at the FilCom [Filipino Community Center]. She and her husband were what we called *mano po*, where the children have to come and pay respects to the older people. And they were paying respects to her, and then when they played a Filipino dance, then she and her husband danced. So, we were very much involved in Rizal Day. In fact, you know, growing up as a teenager, we used to look forward to those meetings, because we got to dance with the boys, right? So, we had to do Filipino dances all the time, and it was fun. So, we did all those dances.

WN: Was Rizal Day the only major . . .

AS: That was the one big holiday for Filipinos. Oh, they used to have contests for, you know, Lions Club queens and all that. But that wasn’t really Filipino, except that there were a lot of Filipino girls running, because there were a lot of us there. That’s about the only Filipino festival thing, just the Rizal Day.

WN: And so besides dancing on Rizal Day, what did you folks do?

AS: What did we do for what, for summer?

WN: On Rizal Day.

AS: Oh, on Rizal Day? Oh, we used to have floats. They used to do floats and stuff. They’d have a program about [José] Rizal. They’d have singing and dancing from other older community people, and then the young ones would be us, and we’d be doing the Filipino dances.

WN: Where was it held?

AS: Well, it was held at the old gym. We didn’t have the new gym yet. It was held at the old gym. I remember one time, it was held at what is now the housing for a lot of workers. That used to be a big field.

WN: Yeah, the ballpark.

- AS: The ballpark, yes. So, one Rizal Day program was there, because I have a picture of my two sisters and me, and my father, and the background was the baseball field. So, it was held there, too. They probably had other games that they organized, you know, for Rizal Day. Yes, but I do remember those dances. My cousin was very good at teaching us those dances. Maybe you have interviewed one of the children. Her name is Rosita Camero.
- WN: Yes.
- AS: Rosita Magoay Camero.
- WN: I know who she is.
- AS: Did you interview her?
- WN: No.
- AS: No. Oh, okay. You need to interview her.
- WN: You think she would want to?
- AS: Oh, yeah.
- WN: I don't think I called her. She's on my list, though. Rosita Camero, yeah? Oh, you know what? I met her younger sister who lives in California.
- AS: San Diego.
- WN: San Diego?
- AS: Carmen?
- WN: Yeah.
- AS: How did you meet her?
- WN: She was on Lāna'i when I was there last month.
- AS: Oh, so you were there for the Fourth of July?
- WN: I was there on July 1.
- AS: Okay, yeah, she was there.
- WN: Yeah, she was there.
- AS: She's my classmate, so—she's my classmate, my cousin, my best friend.
- WN: Oh, okay.
- AS: Yes. So, we grew up together, and we had a lot of fun together. She's one that I couldn't beat at marbles.

WN: (Chuckles) She brought her children, her grandchildren, I think.

AS: Yikes.

WN: They went to the museum [i.e., Lāna‘i Culture and Heritage Center].

AS: Right. Very good.

WN: How nice, how nice. Okay, I wanted to ask you, did your father and mother have a garden?

AS: I was just telling the ladies today, because we were talking about that. Every day at about three or four o'clock, my mother would go out in the garden, pick up vegetables, and we'd have that for dinner.

WN: What kinds of things?

AS: We had all kinds. My father had a rotation of corn, peanuts, okra. Okra is *saloyot*, yes. *Saloyot*, and eggplant, *parya*, bitter melon, and of course *malunggay* tree, and potatoes. I guess that's about it. Where most families had lawns in front of their house, ours was all vegetables. Vegetables in the front yard, and clothesline on the side. Because my mother had to hang the clothes. So, you know, to this day—you know, growing up, we kept thinking, “Why is it that our house is the only house that doesn't have a yard, and then we only have vegetables, and everybody else has a yard?” You know. So, we kept wondering, “Oh, how come?” But then, you know, today that would be the green or in thing to do, right? Have a garden. And oh, he used to grow lots of ginger, nice ginger. My stepmom used to harvest—my father would harvest the ginger, and she would come to O‘ahu and sell it. You know, it was that nice. My father had a green thumb. There are still some plants at our house in Hā‘ikū [O‘ahu] that he planted. They planted a hibiscus tree about maybe five years ago, just died. But the bird of paradise that he planted is still there. The *malunggay* tree is there, but it's kind of dwarfed, it's kind of dying. The banana trees, he planted at our house. Oh, I forgot we had a lot of bananas too, bananas and papayas. Yes, we always had a garden.

WN: Did all the other families have gardens?

AS: No, every other family had yards.

WN: Oh, okay. That's right, you told me that. So, you were the only ones that had a . . .

AS: In that one block. In that one block, yes. (Chuckles)

WN: I thought most people from Lāna‘i had gardens.

AS: Well, they do now, I think. Even our present house now, we have a yard in the front, but in the back we have a lot of vegetables. Because that particular house now is from street to street, right? So, the backyard is really big. Now, that's the last house, that's the house that we moved into just about when I graduated. I don't know why my parents decided, when we had lived in this two-bedroom house for so long, after I graduated, we moved into a house that had three bedrooms. A larger house.

WN: This was the one Up Camp?

AS: Yes.

WN: Okay.

AS: We moved to a larger house, and that's the house that we have now, that we've remodeled, but kept a lot of the wood, a lot of the flooring, and kept a lot of the exterior too, also, with the windows and all. But that's our house now.

WN: And you don't know why you folks moved from Down Camp.

AS: No, I was at the University of Hawai'i, then all of a sudden I came home, and then my parents said, "Oh, we moved." (Chuckles) Oh, okay, we moved.

WN: Okay, you started in Down Camp, and you said you moved to Up Camp at how old?

AS: When I was about seven, when we came back from Kīpapa.

WN: After 1947?

AS: Mm-hmm [yes] , after 1947.

WN: So, all of these stories you're telling me, you know, about the vegetable gardens and so forth, this is the Up Camp house or the Down Camp?

AS: Up Camp. Yes.

WN: So, Down Camp, you were still young, yeah?

AS: I was still very young. I hadn't gone to . . .

WN: Okay.

AS: I think I was still in preschool.

WN: Was there a block number to that one, the Up Camp?

AS: Yes, but I can't remember it.

WN: Okay.

AS: But you know, today it's 408 Kō'eale. (Chuckles)

WN: Oh, okay. And it's still there.

AS: It's still there.

WN: So, it's near the hotel, The Lodge [at Kō'eale]?

AS: Yes, you can walk to it. Oh, you know, I gave you that address for our small house. The 408 is our small house. The house that we have now is 444 'Ilima [Street].

WN: Okay. The one that you have now?

AS: Right, that's the house that my father and my stepmom lived in.

WN: Oh, I see.

AS: All this time, yeah.

WN: I see, I see. So, that's another house.

AS: Yes.

WN: Oh, okay. Did you folks have chickens or poultry around the house?

AS: Just the roosters.

WN: Roosters.

AS: But nothing for eggs and stuff like that. Nothing for hens. Nothing for Henny Penny to lay eggs. (Chuckles) Just roosters.

WN: So how did you get your eggs?

AS: Oh, stores. We didn't have a poultry farm as such.

WN: What store did you go to, mostly?

AS: Well, my father is very patriotic, so we had International Food and Clothing Center, run by Mr. [Pedro] de la Cruz. So, as much as possible, he always wanted to patronize that store. In fact, when Mr. de la Cruz started the store, he asked different Filipinos to invest, so my father was one of the investors. It must have been a really nominal fee and whatnot. I think it's because my father gave some money, that when I was only thirteen years old, I was able to work in that store. So, I was thirteen years old when I first worked at the International store. And it was fun.

WN: Wow.

AS: Yeah.

WN: At age thirteen, yeah?

AS: Yes, because I was in seventh grade.

WN: So, instead of pineapple fields, you worked in a store.

AS: Thirteen was too young to work in the pineapple fields. I didn't work in the pineapple fields until I graduated from high school. I was eighteen, and then I went to the University of Hawai'i, came back, and I worked again.

WN: You know, I was right, we're not going to finish today. You know what, I don't want to rush.

AS: Okay.

WN: Because you have a lot of good stories. I don't want to rush this, because you still have to talk about school and things like that.

AS: Oh, we haven't talked about school yet.

WN: That's important, right? School.

AS: Yes. That was very important. I had a good education, Lānaʻi High [and Elementary] School.

WN: I'm going to turn it off now.

AS: Okay.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 56-20-2-14

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Apolonia Agonoy Stice (AS)

Honolulu, O‘ahu

October 6, 2014

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: Okay, this is October 6, 2014, and I’m interviewing Apolonia Agonoy Stice for session number two.

So, good morning. Remember, we did session one a few months ago.

AS: Didn’t we do that at UH? Oh, no, that was just a meeting. That was just a meeting.

WN: That was a meeting.

AS: Yes, okay.

WN: Unrecorded.

AS: All right, so this is our third meeting.

WN: Right, right.

AS: Yes, yeah. Okay.

WN: Today is going to be shorter than last time.

AS: (Chuckles) Okay.

WN: But my first question to you is, in 1948, you folks moved to Up Camp, you said, right?

AS: Mm-hmm [yes].

WN: Okay. Can you tell me, in terms of Visayan-Ilocano relations, were there good relations, or were there problems? If you want to talk about it.

AS: Okay. Well, I don’t know whether there were any problems, but there was right in the community within our own family, where my parents specifically told us that—well, told me—that, oh, in no way should we date Visayan men, since we were Ilocano. Of course, my first boyfriend was a Visayan person. We were engaged and all that—because his father was Ilocano, but the mother was Visayan, so I guess that was okay. So, yes, I was engaged to a Visayan person, which at first, you know, my parents didn’t really like it, but then it was okay. There were no real big problems

that I saw growing up, you know, among the Ilocanos and Visayans. And I don't recall any Tagalogs, but I'm sure there were some there.

WN: Did you have any kind of sense that there were some differences, or did they all live together?

AS: We all lived together, because you know, Lāna'i City is one big, large community. If you're looking at the city from the air, you can see that it's a big rectangle. So, the Filipinos were interspersed with the rest of the Japanese and all that. But, well, the Ilocanos were the laborers, so they always prided themselves as being the hardworking ones. A lot of my friends in high school were Visayan. I had a lot of Visayan classmates. Growing up, you know, I didn't really notice a so-called conflict, if you want to term it that. So, we all got along very well.

WN: Good. I'd like to ask you about schooling now.

AS: Okay.

WN: Can you talk about your schooling at Lāna'i High and Elementary [School]?

AS: Okay. Start off with anything?

WN: I know you were a good student. But who were some of your favorite teachers and favorite courses?

AS: You know, that's a timely question, because I don't know if you noticed in either yesterday's paper or the day before, there was an article on the shortage of teachers on Lāna'i. I was just relating to my husband that years ago, when I was in elementary school, from first grade on to sixth grade, I had only one Oriental teacher, and that was Mrs. Tom. In every year that I was in elementary school, they were all Mainland teachers. And I can also name all of my Mainland teachers. Miss Lynn, Miss Ross, Miss Rice, Miss Harris, Mrs. Tom. And then again, our fourth-grade teacher liked us so much, she came back to teach us in sixth grade, Miss Harris.

But I think that at that time, it was great that we had these teachers from the Mainland, because they exposed us to a lot of things that we weren't accustomed to. Such as, our fourth-grade teacher wrote to her sister in Ashtabula, Ohio, and the sister packaged a box of maple leaves for us. Every one of us had a maple leaf, and we thought it was so nice, because here was this orangey-brown leaf. The year that we graduated in 1959, one of our classmates, who has since passed away, still had his leaf. So, that was rather special. He came out and he showed it to us. So, that was from our fourth-grade teacher, Miss Donna Harris. So, I think it was a great idea that we had these Mainland teachers, because as I said, they exposed us to a lot of things that we weren't familiar with, such as the seasons and all that.

We had a teacher, Miss Rice, who was our elementary third-grade teacher. However, her major was in art. They didn't have an art teacher at the high school level, so they would do an exchange. Miss Rice would go to the high school to teach art, and Mr. Arnold would come down to the elementary school to our third-grade class and instruct us in music. So, we would sing. You know, he would come, he would play the piano, and then he would teach us different notes, the treble clef, the bass clef, and "Every Good Boy Does Fine." You know, all that. So, we had that advantage of having a music teacher come to us in third grade. And the high school, of course, had an advantage of having truly an art major teaching them art in the third grade.

I think we had a very good education with all of these teachers. And then, when I went on to high school, we had more local teachers at that time. I guess it was easier to recruit elementary school teachers than it was to recruit them for high school.

Our class was very small. We had only forty-nine, I believe, in our class. So, our class is very close. We just had our fifty-fifth class reunion just a couple weeks ago in Vegas. I was supposed to go, but I didn't. So, that's good, they had a good class reunion, from what I understand from my cousin.

WN: You know, you were having Mainland teachers, right?

AS: Mm-hmm [yes].

WN: And when you lived at home, you said you spoke Ilocano as well as English.

AS: Mm-hmm [yes].

WN: Did you feel more American, or did you feel local? What was your identity at that time?

AS: I had a high school teacher who kind of pulled me away and said, "Let's work on your English." So, I said, "Okay, fine." So, this high school teacher, his name was Mr. Tanaka, and every day after school, he would bring out his English 101 book from the University of Hawai'i. And I would have to go through all the words, and he would correct my English—I mean, the way I pronounced things. Such as, everyone was saying "cotton." Well, it's not "cotten" it's cotton. And everyone was saying "shtraight." That's not "shtraight," it's straight. So, before I graduated from high school, I think I had that one advantage. I knew how not to mispronounce words. (Chuckles) Because when I went to the University of Hawai'i, everyone thought that, "Oh, you speak English quite well." So (chuckles) it was thanks to Mr. Tanaka. I don't know why I remember those two words, "cotten" and "shtraight." (Chuckles) But that seems to be a local thing. Today, I don't hear that as often. I don't hear a lot of local people mispronouncing those words. I think it's because of maybe television, or just more exposure to other people. Another one is "tree" for three. In my math classes [as a teacher], I used to tell my students that the tree was outside, but the three was in your textbook (chuckles). So, that was one thing that this one teacher helped me with. So, I'm very grateful for that.

Although, when I did go to the University of Hawai'i, they just put all the local kids in Speech 101, and my girlfriend from Leilehua High School and I, we used to have to go to these lab programs and all we did was laugh all the time we were there. I don't know, we must have learned something, but we sure had a lot of fun together (chuckles). But today, I look at the curriculum for freshmen entering the University of Hawai'i, I don't think they [require] Speech 101. They don't, right?

WN: I don't know.

AS: That would be interesting to know, whether they still require . . .

WN: Yeah, I think it's an elective to take speech but it's not a requirement.

AS: It was not an elective for all the local people going to the University of Hawai'i, you had to take Speech 101. Then, you had to also face a board, and they listened to your speech, and if you didn't quite say the *A*'s correctly, or the *TH*'s, then you were put into another special program just

to correct that. And then, you had to pass that. So, that was tiring, the Speech 101, but we had a lot of fun. Oh, and another thing you had to take, as schoolteachers, you had to take Speech 365 to know how to present your lessons to the students. But it was quite interesting.

Talking about language, when I returned from the Peace Corps in 1966, my first teaching assignment was at Waimānalo [Elementary School]. And I came home crying to my husband, because believe it or not, I couldn't understand what they were saying. Their pidgin English was very different from the pidgin English on Lānaʻi, and I just could not understand. I didn't know what they were saying. Maybe because I was away from the language for two years, being in the Philippines in the Peace Corps, but I just couldn't understand them. But of course, it didn't take me long, I didn't come home crying all the time, just that one time (chuckles). Because as a first-time teacher, you always want to do things well, and not to be able to communicate with my students. But that didn't last long; it was okay.

WN: What were some of your favorite courses that you had in high school?

AS: In high school? We had had the math courses and social studies classes, and English. Oh, that's all of them, isn't it? (Chuckles)

WN: Science.

AS: Science.

WN: There was science?

AS: Yes, there was science. Mr. Tanaka was our science teacher, and we had really good math teachers also. So, yeah, math and sciences were my favorites. In elementary school, it was when Miss Harris taught us geography and social studies, that was my favorite, too. Miss Harris, although—going back to elementary school. Miss Harris, even though she was our elementary school teacher, fourth-grade curriculum throughout the whole state was Hawaiiana. She was a *haole* teacher from the Mainland, but she learned a lot of things Hawaiian, and she imparted that to us when we had our Hawaiian lessons. In fact, I can still recall the textbook that we used, it was written by Helen Gay Pratt. The Gay family was part of Lānaʻi, yeah. She was part of that family, so it was kind of interesting that we would be reading a textbook that she had written.

WN: Now, this Mr. Tanaka, who was a science teacher, he was the same one who wanted to correct your grammar.

AS: Yes. Right, right, right. He was the same one.

WN: I thought he would be the English teacher.

AS: I know. No, it was Mr. Tanaka. Mr. Tanaka today lives on the Big Island. He married one of the nurses on Lānaʻi, and they live on the Big Island. And Mr. Mizuno was another favorite teacher of mine. Mr. Mizuno became superintendent of the Big Island schools, oh, maybe thirty years ago, and he lives on the Big Island now. He's [originally] from the Big Island.

WN: So, on Lānaʻi, in high school, were the teachers pretty much specialized, or did teachers teach a lot of things?

AS: I think in high school, they were specialized. Mr. Tanaka was a science teacher, so he taught only science. Mr. Kubo taught only social studies. I don't recall teachers pairing off and one teacher was teaching social studies and then teaching English. They were all specialized in their field. So, we were fortunate in that manner.

WN: And when you were going to elementary and high school, what were your aspirations? What did you want to do?

AS: Oh, because Miss Harris was my favorite teacher, I wanted to be a fourth-grade teacher. So, yes, I always wanted to be a teacher. At one time, I wanted to be a nurse, but then I thought, oh, no, I think I'd rather be a teacher than a nurse.

WN: And growing up on Lānaʻi, aspiring to be a teacher or a nurse, was that a common thing [for a woman], or were you sort of, you know, special or different?

AS: Well, you know, in 1959, my father's aspiration for me was to be the secretary to the manager of the plantation. He thought that was the highest job that you could have, you know, because . . .

WN: For a woman, yeah?

AS: For a woman. Because the secretary, of course, had a nice office, and she dressed well, and so he thought, oh, that would be a good job for my daughter. (Chuckles) That was his aspiration for me, to become a secretary to the manager. Not a secretary to anybody, but it had to be the manager of the plantation.

In our class of 1959, we had ten of us going to universities here and on the Mainland. I think at that time, that was the most number of students going on to further education. Also, this was in 1959, so that was—to me, that was an accomplishment for our class. I don't know what happened after 1959, whether they still had as many students, but we had a lot of people go to colleges on the Mainland, and here at the University of Hawai'i.

WN: Okay, let's talk about your senior year, getting ready for college. You became a Dole Scholar.

AS: Mm-hmm [yes].

WN: Can you tell me what went behind that?

AS: Well, in 1951, when Jane [Sakamura Nakamura] became the Dole Scholar, I was only, what, ten years old. I wanted to do the same thing, because I thought, oh, well, you know, then my parents won't have to pay for my education and whatnot.

WN: So, back then, at ten years old, when Jane Sakamura became the first Dole Scholar, you actually aspired to . . .

AS: Right. And she was not the only one that I looked up to. It was my cousin, too, my cousin Rosita, her classmate.

WN: Oh, Rosita?

AS: Rosita Camero. Rosita graduated as the valedictorian of her class, and Jane was salutatorian. They were both vying for the scholarship, of course, but Jane got it. But it was because of my

cousin, I always wanted to do the same things she did. I wanted to take geometry when she was taking geometry and everything, you know. We watched my two older cousins, Rosita and Arsenia, do their homework. I remember my cousin Arsenia doing geometry homework, trying to prove that two triangles were congruent, and I thought, oh, how interesting, what is she doing? (Chuckles) As two families growing up together, we didn't have anywhere else to go but, you know, go to their house and everything. They had six children, and we had three, so we often spent a lot of evenings together at their house. When my older male cousins went out on a date, senior prom or junior prom, we had to teach them how to dance, and oh, it was so much fun. We were just laughing. (Chuckles) He had a date, and he didn't know how to dance!

(Laughter)

AS: So, it was my cousins who influenced what I wanted to do. It was my cousin Rosita that, you know, I wanted to do exactly what she did. I wanted to work hard and do exactly what she did. So, it was thanks to her that I thought, oh, you know, one of these days. . . . But I was only ten. She graduated in [19]51. (Chuckles)

WN: So, was it an application process for the Dole Scholarship?

AS: Oh, yes, you had to apply. I remember they flew us here [O'ahu] for the interview. We had the interview in Dole Cannery. There were three finalists, one from Honolulu, one from Wahiawā, and me, from Lāna'i. And so, there were only three of us, and there was a whole bunch of people looking at us, and that was kind of scary. You know, you're only eighteen years old, and somebody's asking you all these questions. That was my first big interview. They didn't make the announcement until graduation day. You know, it's not like some of the scholarships you get today, they tell you and then they announce it. But no, nobody knew. Then, I think it was in 1959 or maybe in [19]57, instead of awarding just one scholarship, they decided to make one four-year, and then the other two who did not get it from the other districts would get one-year scholarships. So, the one from Wahiawā and the one from Honolulu got one-year scholarships.

WN: I see. So, you got two years?

AS: No, I got the four-year and the other two got the one-year. And you know, I don't know how much longer it continued, because after 1960, I lost track of who the Dole Scholars were. It would be interesting to find out if they continued.

WN: Do you remember what your reaction was when you found out you got it on graduation day?

AS: Oh, yeah, I was really surprised. Because, you know, there were two others who were also competing. And they turned out to be good friends. I saw them at the University of Hawai'i when I went there as a freshman.

WN: Do you remember how your parents reacted? Your father?

AS: Oh, yes. My father was—I have a picture, in fact, of my father clapping, and his face just beaming. They were very proud. In fact, he's so funny, he talked about how, whenever he walked around town, you know, all the *haole* supervisors would say, "Oh, hello, Mr. Agonoy." Because of me. (Chuckles) So, he was proud of that. Instead of just saying hello, they would say, "Hello, Mr. Agonoy," because they knew who he was.

WN: Oh, that's nice.

- AS: Yes, it was nice.
- WN: So, if you can just tell me, after you got the scholarship, where did your—what paths you took.
- AS: Well, after my scholarship, then I went to the University of Hawai‘i for two years, then I went to Marylhurst College for my third year, then I came back to the University of Hawai‘i and finished off.
- WN: Part of the scholarship [requirement] was that you had to spend one year . . .
- AS: Ye, you spent one year of your choice [at a Mainland college].
- WN: Why did you choose that college?
- AS: Oh, because it was a Catholic school. Then, later, when I returned, I finished up my teaching credentials here. Then, I did my student teaching at Kaimukī Intermediate School, then went on to Stevenson [Intermediate School] for internship. Right after that, I went in the Peace Corps. When I came back, I taught at Waimānalo, then Kailua, and then the last place I taught was Kalaheo, and I retired from Kalaheo High School.
- WN: For a number of years, yeah, at Kalaheo?
- AS: Yes, thirty [years].
- WN: Now, you said that you wanted to be an elementary school fourth-grade teacher.
- AS: Because of my . . .
- WN: And you ended up . . .
- AS: Teaching high school.
- WN: How did you make that switch?
- AS: Oh, I switched when I started with my courses, I didn’t know whether I really wanted to be an elementary school teacher. So, at first, I thought I was going to be a home economics teacher. I went into home ec because of—I don’t know if you’re familiar with the program Future Homemakers of America. They had a national convention in Kansas City, Missouri in 1958, and I was chosen as one of the delegates to that national conference. So, I thought, one of these days, I’m going to take over Mrs. McGill’s job. She was the head of the home economics department in the Department of Education. So, I always used to tease her that I would take over her job. But then, after I was in home ec for a year and a half at the University [of Hawai‘i], it wasn’t what I really wanted to teach, so then I switched.
- WN: And so, you were a middle-school math teacher?
- AS: High school.
- WN: High school.
- AS: Kalaheo High School, yes.

- WN: Kalaheo High School. What about Kaimukī and Stevenson?
- AS: Oh, that was—I interned in teaching math there. We used to call it intermediate school. Now, they call it middle school. (Chuckles)
- WN: So, even through the Peace Corps, when did you decide that you were probably going to be living somewhere other than Lāna‘i?
- AS: Oh, because there were no jobs on Lāna‘i. There were only teaching jobs, and my husband already was working on his PhD at the University of Hawai‘i. I thought, oh, it’s too hard. You know, what would I do? What would he do living on Lāna‘i? However, it’s really not a bad place to retire, because of the ferry system that goes from Lāna‘i to Maui, and airplane fares, even though they’re expensive, it’s easy to get back and forth. So, there’s a possibility, maybe in a couple years, we might retire to Lāna‘i. But then, all my grandsons are here, and they’re so involved with so many things. We don’t want to miss that. So, we’ll probably stay in Kāne‘ohe for a while. But Lāna‘i is very special. We go there at least twice a year.
- WN: Did your father and mother want you to come back?
- AS: Well, they did, but you know, my father passed away—let’s see, this would be nine years now that he’s gone. And my mother has been gone since I was thirty. So, yes, they always wanted us to go back. And, it is nice. I know a lot of my cousins who live on the Mainland would like to go back to Lāna‘i, but it’s economically not practical, plus all their grandchildren are there. However, I have two cousins who have children who own homes on Kaua‘i and on Lāna‘i, so they’re making their roots there.
- WN: So, whatever became of your father’s house?
- AS: We still have it.
- WN: Oh, you still do?
- AS: Yes. We still have it, and that’s the house that we go to all the time.
- WN: I see.
- AS: And my uncle who lived on Lāna‘i left his house with us, too, so we rent out that house. But whenever we visit, we stay in our house. Very close to the Blue Ginger Café. It’s just walking distance, so every time we’re there, it’s “Why fix breakfast? We may as well go there and have breakfast.” (Chuckles)
- WN: Yeah, Blue Ginger Café, that used to be the drycleaners.
- AS: The drycleaners, exactly.
- WN: The laundry or something.
- AS: Yes, run by a Filipino family. The Gabriel family.
- WN: That’s right, I interviewed Jane Gabriel.
- AS: Yes.

WN: Jane Lee Gabriel. That was her husband's family.

AS: Right, and Jane Lee's brother was KeNam Kim.

WN: Yes.

AS: And KeNam Kim was our guest speaker at our graduation. Just the other day, I just saw [a copy of] his speech. For some reason, I kept his speech, so I still have it.

WN: He was a very prominent individual.

AS: Yes, he was the state comptroller.

WN: Okay, just a few more questions I just want to ask you.

AS: Okay.

WN: You're a Lāna'i girl, born and raised. I just wanted to ask you what you think of the changes that have taken place since you left.

AS: Well, I think the changes were inevitable. With the pineapple out and everything, people weren't having jobs. And then [David] Murdock came in, then now [Larry] Ellison. I think he's [Ellison] providing a lot of jobs for a lot of people. And this makes it possible for them to stay there. I think he's doing a great job. At least he's talking to the community in terms of what they want to do, and the things that he has planned for the community. I believe one of the first things he did, which I thought was a very great move, was to reopen the [community] swimming pool. It was closed; I don't know why it was closed for so many years. But it was closed, and then he reopened it. He put in the heating system for the pool. I understand it was always there, but it was never turned on, for whatever reason. He re-landscaped the place, and put in more playground equipment. So now, when my grandchildren go to Lāna'i, that's one of the first things that they want to do, go to the swimming pool and swim. So, I think he's doing a great job.

I hope they can work out all the problems they have with the community. I don't know whether it can sustain a lot of people, the number of people that he wants to have. Right now, it's [population] is about 3,000. When we were growing up, it was about 2,000. I do hope that the smallness of the community, the tightness—see, when you go to Lāna'i, everybody knows who you are, and they're always saying hello and hi, and people wave at you. I hope that will not be lost, and it will still be a close community. But I think he's doing a good job.

WN: So, are you in favor of the hotels and golf courses?

AS: Well, the golf courses were always there [prior to Larry Ellison purchasing Lāna'i]. There was a [company-owned] golf course [Cavendish Golf Course] where Father Evarist, in the early [19]50s, our parish priest on Lāna'i, built a clubhouse for the people. It was not really a clubhouse, it was just a place for people to just sit around and talk to each other after the games. I believe that structure is still there. I think they redid the walls and whatnot, but I think it's still there. So, that was the free one. And then, The Challenge at Mānele was built when they built the [Mānele Bay] Hotel, and The Experience at Kō'e was also built. I don't golf, but I understand that those golf courses are great for golfers. So, those two golf courses, you know, bring people. I know that a lot of people take the early ferry from Lahaina, they'll golf all day, and then they'll take the ferry back to their [Maui] hotels, which is great.

WN: So, in twenty years, thirty years, what would you like to see? Well, what is your vision of Lānaʻi in thirty years?

AS: Well, I hope that Lānaʻi will still keep the closeness of the community. I hope they'll still be friendly to each other, and all that. I don't know if I want to see stoplights on Lānaʻi, because it's so small. So, I hope people will just be courteous and stop. I know my cousin Rosita says, "There's a lot of traffic when you have to wait behind five cars to make a turn." But, you know (chuckles), what I would really like to see is electric carts or cars on Lānaʻi. Carts, more specifically, because it's such a small place. However, if you live on one end of the city, you're not going to carry all your groceries when you go grocery shopping. So, if you had an electric cart, which we tried to get at one time, then you can drive to the store, put all your groceries in, then go back home. So, I'd like to see that. I think that would be a really good addition to the community. Plus, it would eliminate all the cars. I hope that the people will not lose their closeness to each other. And I also hope that those who go fishing will still be able to go fishing, and I think that he's [Ellison] going to make sure that that will still be possible. People can still go fishing; people can still go hunting.

I'd like to see more. . . . I don't quite know what courses—if the students from Lānaʻi High [and Elementary] School have enough courses—I think they do. I think the Department of Education has made sure that they have the courses to leap into the University of Hawaiʻi if they choose to.

We could lower the airfares. If they would lower the airfares, then we'd have more people from Lānaʻi going back there. You know, part of the reason why we never have reunions on Lānaʻi is because people always say, "Oh, it's so expensive to get there." And it is. It's very expensive. It's cheaper to have reunions in Vegas, which we do. So, yes, if they would lower the airfare, that would be good, too.

WN: So, when people say, "Oh, where you from?" and you say, "I'm from Lānaʻi," what kinds of feelings come out of you?

AS: Oh, it makes me feel proud to come from Lānaʻi. When I was at the University of Hawaiʻi, people would ask, "Oh, where are you from?"

I'd say, "I'm from Lānaʻi."

"Oh, you're the first the person that I've met from Lānaʻi."

You know, even local people don't go to Lānaʻi, or they don't know too many people from Lānaʻi. After all, there were only fifty of us that graduated [from the class of 1959], you know. But yes, it makes me feel proud. Especially when you meet someone from Lānaʻi, and you start talking to them and ask them, "Oh, who are your parents?" and you know who their parents are, or their great-grandparents or whatever. So, that's good.

WN: Okay. Any last things you want to say?

AS: No, not really. But it's been nice talking to you, Warren.

WN: Nice talking to you. You've had a very full life, and I wish you many years of happiness.

AS: Thank you, thank you so much.

WN: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW

Lāna‘i:

Reflecting on the Past; Bracing for the Future

Center for Oral History
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